

SECRET INVASION™

MARVEL

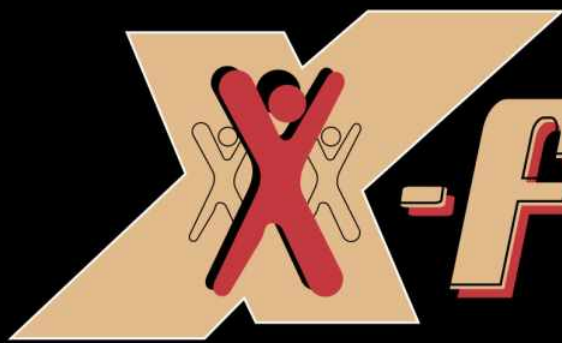
34

DAVID • STROMAN • SIBAL • COX

X-FACTOR



HE LOVES YOU PART 3 of 3



IN A SOCIETY WHERE MUTANTS AND FORMER MUTANTS ALIKE FEEL THREATENED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM, THEY TURN TO THEIR FIRST, BEST LINE OF DEFENSE WHENEVER TROUBLE ARISES: X-FACTOR, THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY FOUNDED BY MADROX, THE MULTIPLE MAN.

X-FACTOR

PREVIOUSLY...



HAVING RELOCATED TO DETROIT, X-FACTOR HAS BEEN HIRED BY DARWIN'S FATHER, WHO IS LOOKING FOR HIS MISSING SON. THE GOOD NEWS IS, THEY FOUND HIM, APPARENTLY IN THE COMPANY OF LONGSHOT. THE BAD NEWS IS, IT TURNS OUT LONGSHOT IS A SKRULL. AND NOT JUST ANY SKRULL: THE FORMIDABLE TALISMAN, THE SKRULL'S CONNECTION TO THEIR GODS. THE TALISMAN IS BEING SOUGHT BY SHE-HULK AND HER PARTNER, JAZINDA, IN THE HOPE THAT HE CAN BE USED TO WARD OFF THE SKRULL INVASION OF EARTH. BUT AS SO OFTEN HAPPENS, MISUNDERSTANDING HAS LED TO X-FACTOR GOING HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH SHE-HULK WHILE THE TALISMAN ATTEMPTS TO MAKE GOOD HIS ESCAPE.

IN OTHER NEWS, ARIEL IS BACK FROM THE DICK RITGER BOWLING CAMP IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, HAVING HONED HER SKILLS, AND SHE IS LOOKING AT COLLEGES. SHE'S AIMING FOR DELAWARE STATE SINCE SHE LIKES THEIR CURRICULUM, PLUS KIM TERRELL IS THE BOWLING COACH. AND CAROLINE GOT HER FIRST PASSPORT SO WE COULD ATTEND A CONVENTION IN TORONTO. WE TOLD HER SHE NEEDED TO HAVE A PASSPORT PHOTO TAKEN AND SHE SAID IN ANNOYANCE, "DON'T TAKE MY PICTURE. I LOOK HIDEOUS." FIVE YEARS OLD GOING ON EIGHTEEN.



SO...MY SON IS CALLED "DARWIN"?



YES, BECAUSE OF HIS EVOLUTIONARY ABILITIES.

I UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT... DARWIN?

IT WAS EITHER THAT OR "SCOPES MONKEY BOY."



I'M SORRY... WHAT?

NEVER MIND.



WHEN I THINK OF ALL THE THINGS I SHOULD HAVE DONE FOR HIM, SIRYN. I'M THE WORLD'S WORST FATHER.



WERE YOU AN ARMS DEALER? EVER SELL ANYONE OUT?

UHM... NO.

GET YOURSELF KILLED?



OBTAINING NOT, RICTOR.

FROM WHERE I'M SITTING, YOU'RE FATHER OF THE FREAKING YEAR. TRUST ME.



DETROIT.

SHE-HULK,
BELIEVE IT
OR NOT, I
SYMPATHIZE
WITH YOU.

I KNOW
ABOUT EVERYTHING
THAT WAS DONE TO
YOU AND TO YOUR
COUSIN.

DONE TO
YOU BY PEOPLE
YOU TRUSTED,
DEPEND-
ON.

YOU WERE
AN AVENGER, A
MEMBER OF THE
FANTASTIC FOUR...
YOU WERE THE
ULTIMATE
INSIDER.

AND SUDDENLY,
PRESTO, YOU'RE
ON THE OUTSIDE
LOOKING IN.

PLUS THEY
MADE YOU INTO
SOMETHING YOU
NEVER WERE:
A VICTIM.

ALL OF THAT
COMBINES INTO
A LOT OF REASON
FOR DISPLACED
ANGER.

LONG STORY
SHORT: I
UNDERSTAND WHAT
YOU'RE GOING
THROUGH.

SHORT
STORY EVEN
SHORTER,
MADROX...





THE PROBLEM WITH TAKING ON SOMEONE LIKE SHE-HULK IS--AND I HATE TO ADMIT IT--THE WHOLE "SHE" PART TENDS TO MAKE YOU OVERLOOK THE "HULK" PART, AND YOU FORGET WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

MY DUPES YELP AS SHE SHAKES THEM OFF WITH THAT SAME WEIRD KIND OF SLAPPING NOISE THAT A DOG MAKES WHEN IT SHAKES OFF WATER.

MORE DUPES POP INTO EXISTENCE AS THEY LAND, BUT IT'S LIKE TRYING TO STOP A TIDAL WAVE WITH DIXIE CUPS.



UH-OH.

YOU BET YOUR BUTT, "UH-OH."



IMPACT CAUSES YOU TO REPLICATE. I GET THAT. TELL ME THIS:

IF I TEAR YOU IN HALF, DOES THAT COUNT AS AN IMPACT?

I'M REALLY HOPING THAT QUESTION'S RHETORICAL.



JAZINDA? YOU THERE?





TRUST IS A DELICATE ENOUGH
CONCEPT UNDER THE BEST OF
CIRCUMSTANCES. BETRAYAL CAN
SCREW YOU UP LONG-TERM.

BETRAYAL CAN
DESTROY MARRIAGES...
CAREERS...LIVES.

I CAN'T BLAME SHE-HULK
FOR NOT WANTING TO TAKE
THE TIME TO TALK, BECAUSE
THAT REQUIRES TRUST THAT
THE OTHER PERSON IS GOING
TO LISTEN AND CARE.

SHE'D RATHER JUST
HANDLE THINGS
HERSELF, HER WAY.

BUT SHE'S IN OUR TOWN NOW.
IN THE MIDDLE OF A PROBLEM
INVOLVING MUTANTS. WE NEED
TO GET HER TO TRUST US
ENOUGH TO LISTEN TO US AND
WORK WITH US.

OTHERWISE THIS
CAN GET LONG
AND INVOLVED
AND END BADLY.

READ SHE-HULK #31
FOR PART 2.

THE DARWIN AWARDS PART 3

PETER
DAVID
WRITER

LARRY
STROMAN
DENCER

JON
SIBAL
INKER

JEREMY
COX
COLORIST

VC'S CORY
PETIT
LETTERER

WILL PANZO &
AUBREY SITTERSON
EDITORS

JOE
QUESADA
EDITOR IN CHIEF

DAN
BUCKLEY
PUBLISHER



I...I
THOUGHT
YOU WERE MY
FRIEND!

I
TRUSTED
YOU!



AND YOU
WERE RIGHT TO
DO SO.

NO MATTER
HOW I APPEAR
TO YOU, 'MANDO,
I'M STILL THE
SAME INSIDE...



G-GET
AWAY FROM
ME!

YOU'RE
A SKRULL!

OOOOOF!



TRUE
ENOUGH. I AM
A SKRULL.

BUT I PRESENTED
MYSELF TO YOU IN A
WAY THAT WOULD
ENCOURAGE YOU TO
LISTEN TO ME.



WHY
WOULD I LISTEN
TO YOU? YOU'RE
A SKRULL!



YES, WE'VE
ESTABLISHED THAT.
REPEATEDLY.

AND YOUR
WORDS PROVE THE
NECESSITY OF MY
SUBTERFUGE.

AND YOU
SAID YOU'D HELP
ME FIND PROFESSOR
XAVIER!

A LIE,
ADMITTEDLY. I
HAVE NO IDEA
WHERE CHARLES
XAVIER IS.

BUT WE DISCUSSED
MANY *OTHER* THINGS IN
OUR TIME TOGETHER.

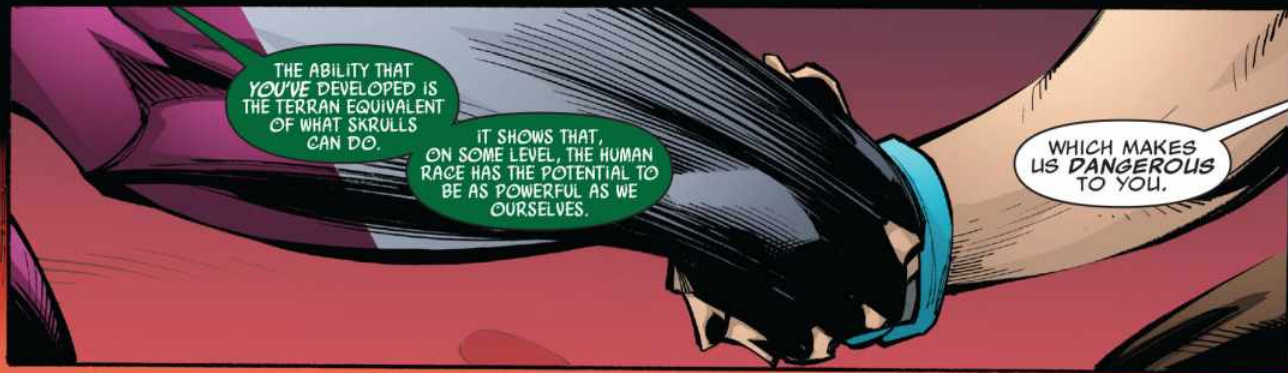
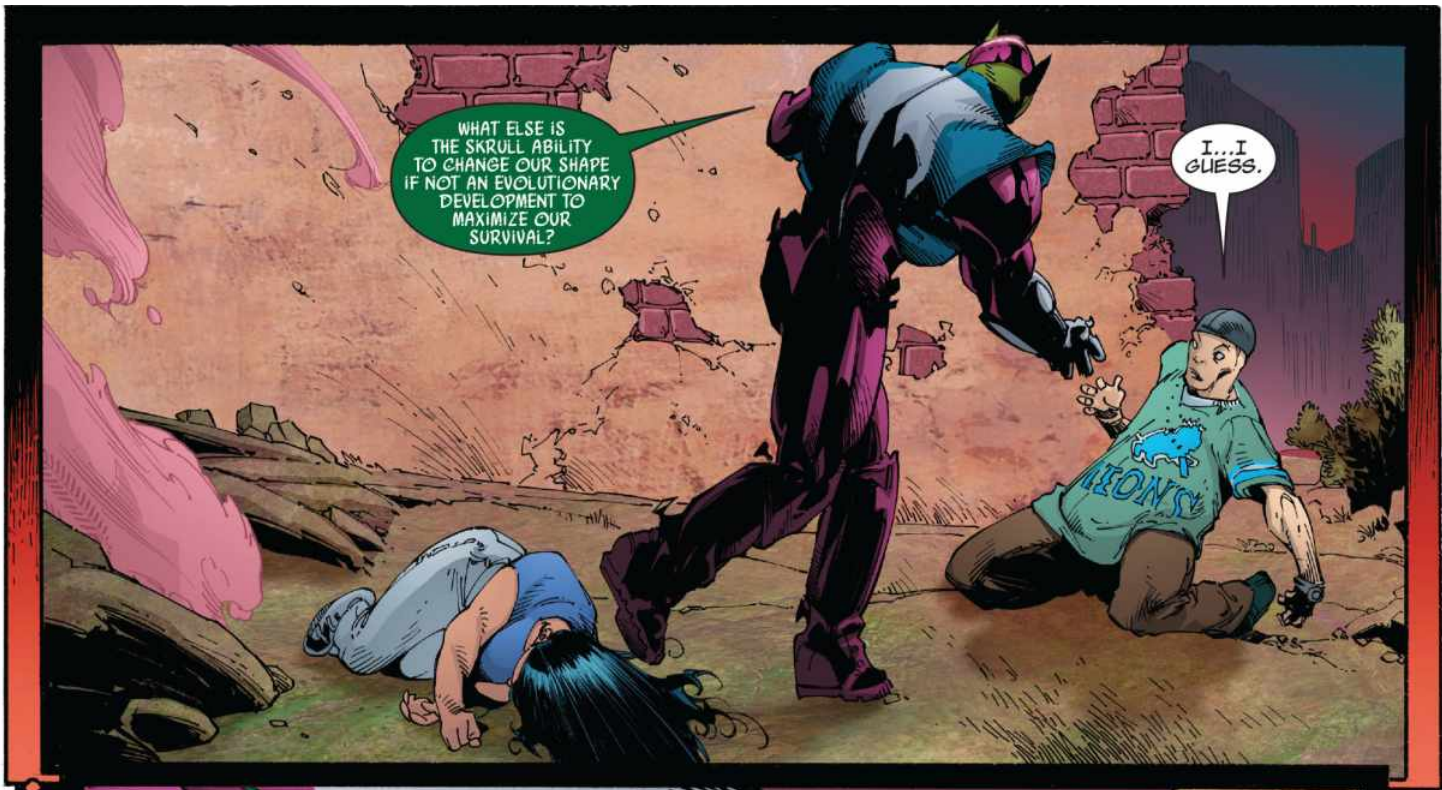
I SAID THAT YOU
HAD TREMENDOUS
POTENTIAL, AND I
MEANT IT.

MY BRETHREN
HAVE THEORIZED
THAT YOU EXISTED.
IT IS THE GODS' WILL
THAT I WAS THE ONE
WHO FOUND YOU.

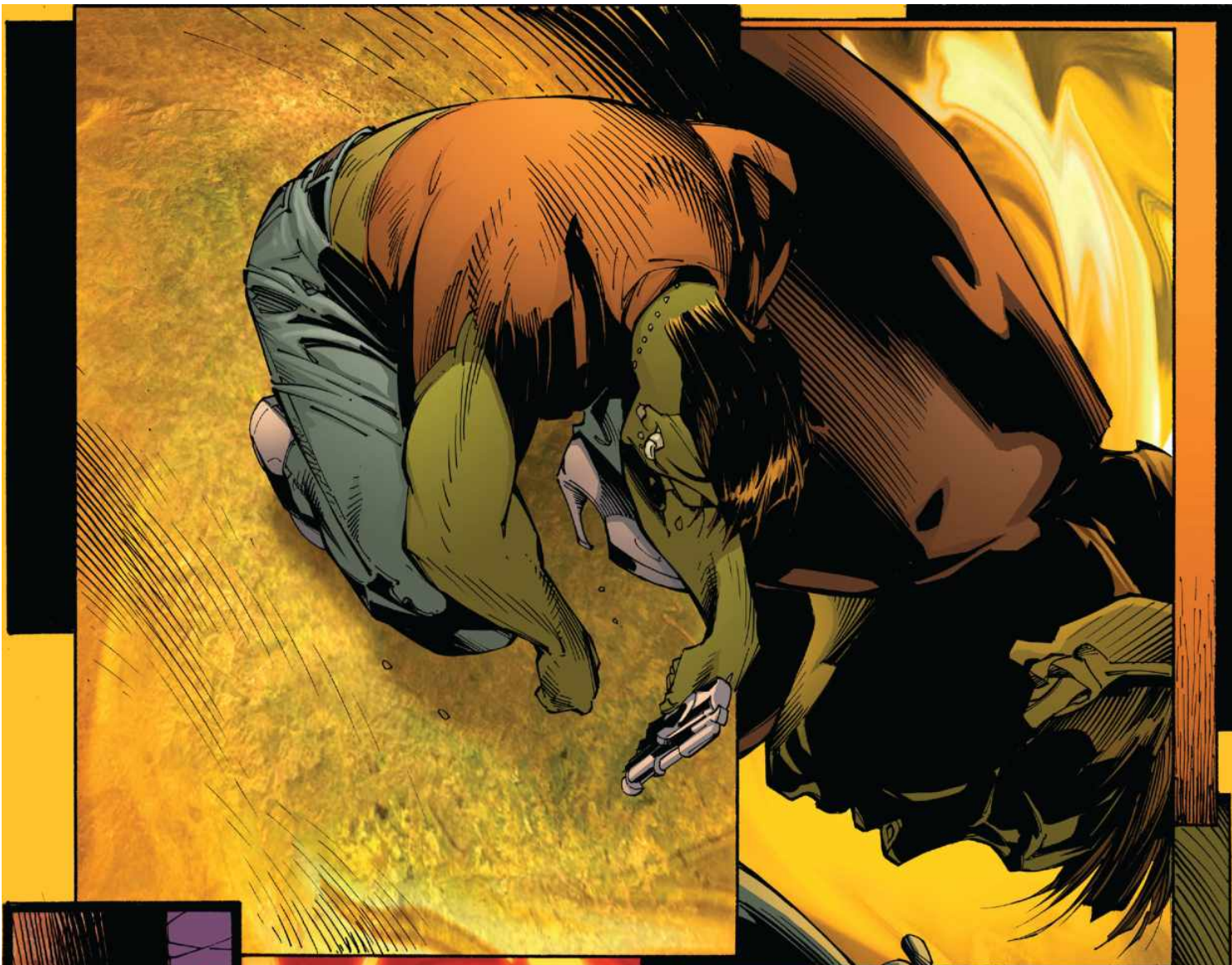
WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

ARMANDO...ON A
GENETIC LEVEL, THERE
IS NOT THAT VAST A
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
HUMANS AND SKRULLS.
I BELIEVE THAT, FROM
AN EVOLUTIONARY
POINT OF VIEW...

...YOU ARE
THE MISSING
LINK.







IMPRESSIVE.

I WOULD NOT HAVE THOUGHT, KL'RT-SPAWN, THAT YOU WOULD HAVE THE WISDOM TO BEHAVE IN SUCH A MANNER, TO SHOW PROPER DEFERENCE.

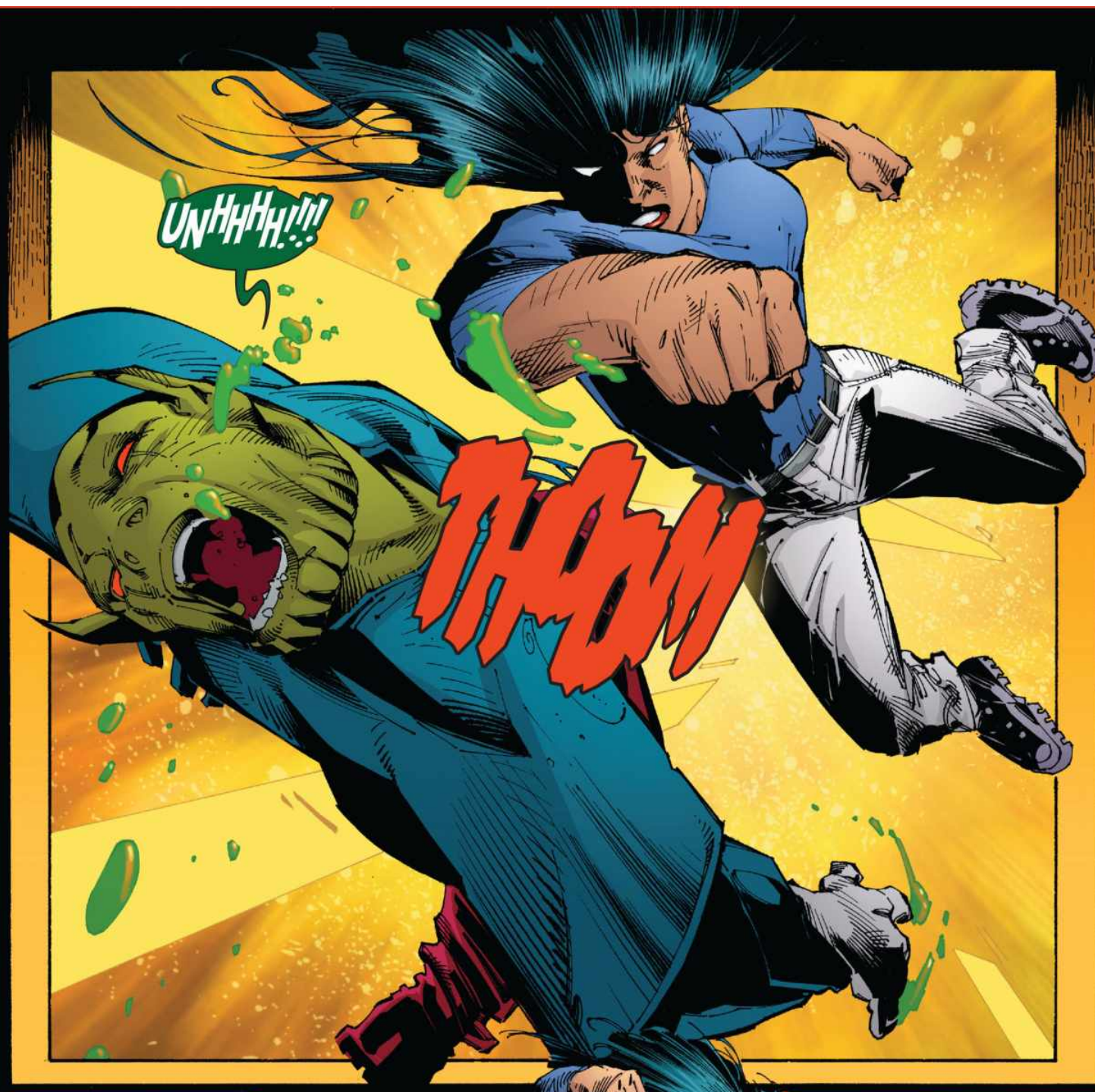


I'M NOT SHOWING PROPER DEFERENCE.

OH, REALLY? THEN WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT?



GETTING OUT OF THE WAY.





MONET!
IT'S NOT
REALLY
LONGSHOT!
IT'S--

A SKRULL.
GOT THE MEMO,
MADROX.

YOU SHOULD
HAVE HEARD THE
LINE HE WAS LAYING
ON DARWIN.



YOU WERE FAKING.
YOU WEATHERED MY ATTACK
BETTER THAN YOU ALLOWED
ME TO BELIEVE.

YOU ARE
VERY CLEVER FOR
A TERRAN.

VERY CLEVER
TERRANS...



...WILL BE
THE FIRST TO
BE DISPOSED
OF!





"TRUST."
WHAT DO HUMANS
KNOW OF TRUST?

YOU CAN'T
EVEN AGREE ON
ONE GOD.



YOU NEED US
TO TAKE CHARGE OF
YOU. LEFT TO YOUR OWN
DEVICES, YOU WOULD
DESTROY EACH OTHER
SOONER OR LATER.

WE COULD
NOT MERELY STAND
BY AND WATCH SUCH
POTENTIAL, SUCH
RAW MATERIAL, BE
WASTED.

IT WOULD
BE A SIN.

AND I, THE
HIGHEST AND MOST
SACRED TALISMAN OF
THE SKRULL EMPIRE,
KNOW QUITE A BIT
ABOUT SIN.



THERE'S A SMELL IN THE AIR, LIKE BARBECUE, AND I ONLY REALIZE BELATEDLY THAT IT'S US.

WHAT THE HELL IS HE HITTING US WITH--?

IT'S CONVICTION.

HUH?



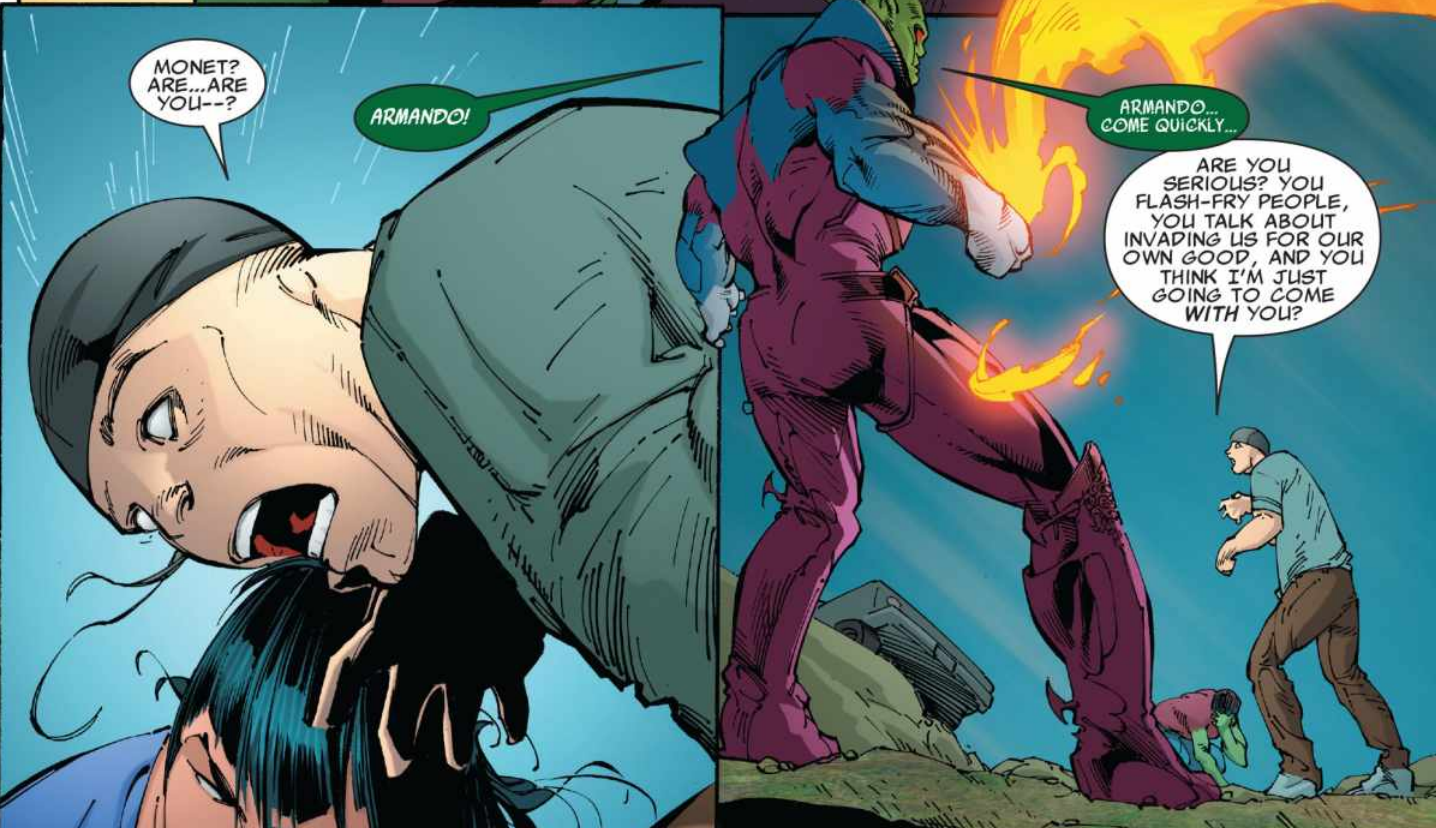
IT'S THE PURE CONVICTION OF HIS BELIEFS. HE TRUSTS IN THE GODS IMPLICITLY.

HE CAN DESTROY YOU BECAUSE HE BELIEVES HE CAN.



HOW DO WE TAKE HIM DOWN...?

BELIEVE IN SOMETHING MORE THAN HE DOES.



MONET? ARE...ARE YOU--?

ARMANDO!

ARMANDO... COME QUICKLY...

ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU FLASH-FRY PEOPLE, YOU TALK ABOUT INVADING US FOR OUR OWN GOOD, AND YOU THINK I'M JUST GOING TO COME WITH YOU?



YOU TRUSTED ME WHEN I LOOKED LIKE THIS.

EVEN IN *THIS* FORM, I WAS TESTING YOUR ABILITIES, TRYING TO DETERMINE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL.

ARE YOU SO SHALLOW, ARMANDO, THAT YOU NEED TO DEPEND UPON EXTERIOR LOOKS?

ZZZZZZ
HHHH



WHAT IF I LOOKED LIKE *THIS*?

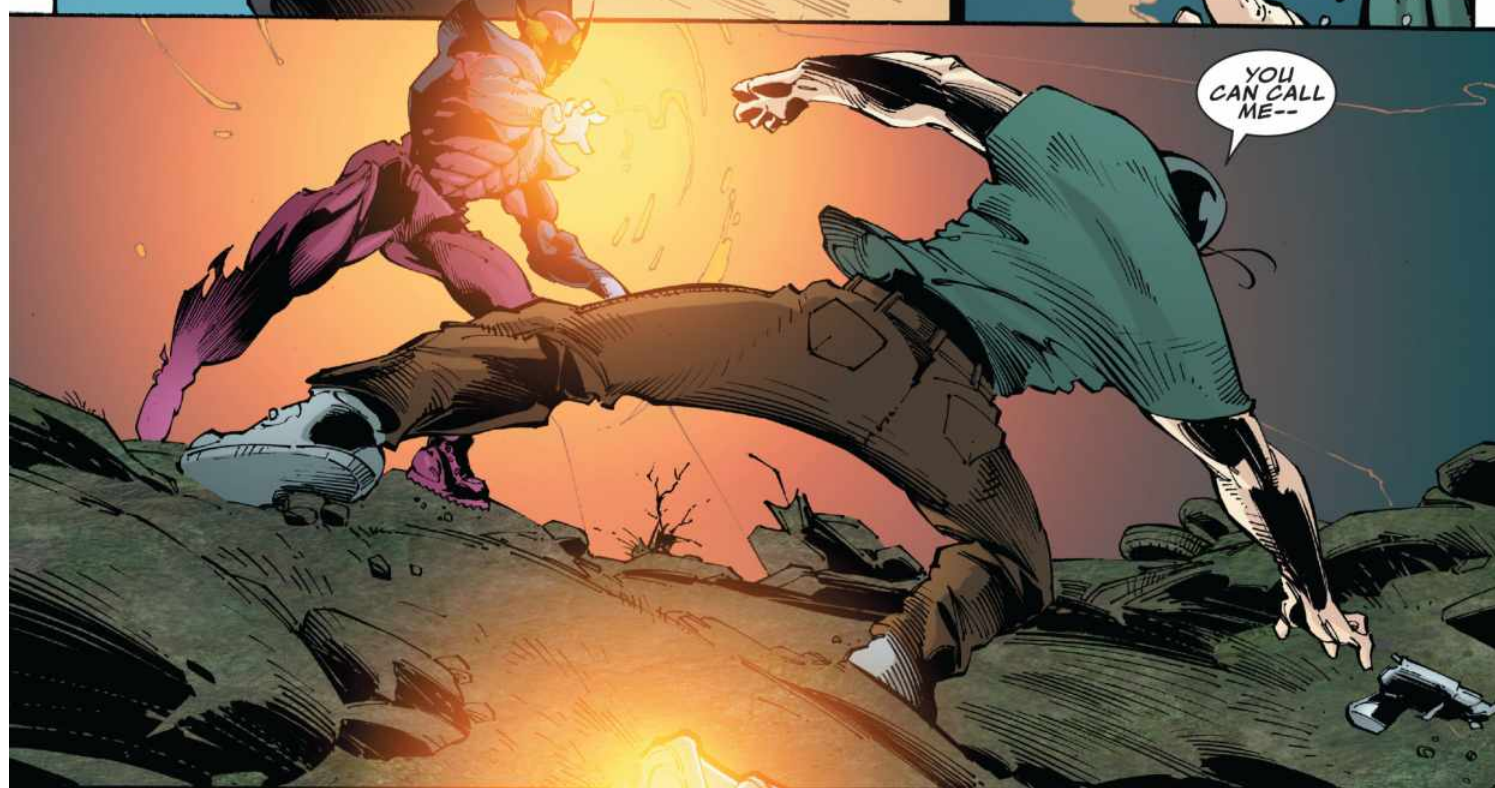
I SAW THE WAY YOU LOOKED AT THE CREATURE WITH *THIS* APPEARANCE. I CAN BE INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM HER, EVEN DOWN TO THE VOICE.

WOULD YOU FIND *THIS* PREFERABLE?



I CAN'T EVEN *BEGIN* TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH I WOULDN'T.

AND STOP CALLING ME ARMANDO. ONLY CLOSE FRIENDS GET TO CALL ME ARMANDO.



YOU CAN CALL ME--

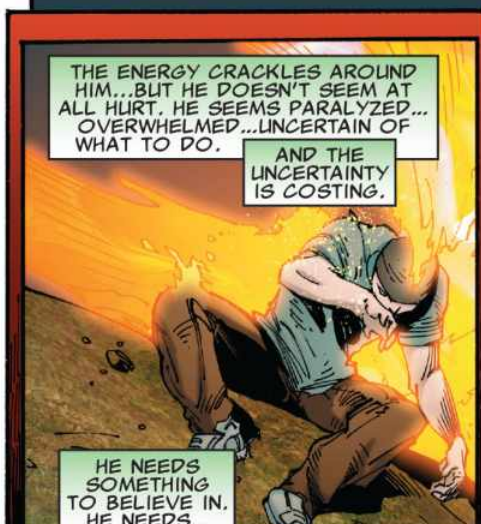


--DARWIN!!!



DARWIN'S WHOLE THING IS THAT HE CAN SUPPOSEDLY EVOLVE TO SURVIVE ANY SITUATION.

BUT HE NEEDS TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE HERE. HE NEEDS TO FIND A WAY TO PUT THIS GUY DOWN.



THE ENERGY CRACKLES AROUND HIM...BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM AT ALL HURT. HE SEEMS PARALYZED...OVERWHELMED...UNCERTAIN OF WHAT TO DO.

AND THE UNCERTAINTY IS COSTING.

HE NEEDS SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN. HE NEEDS



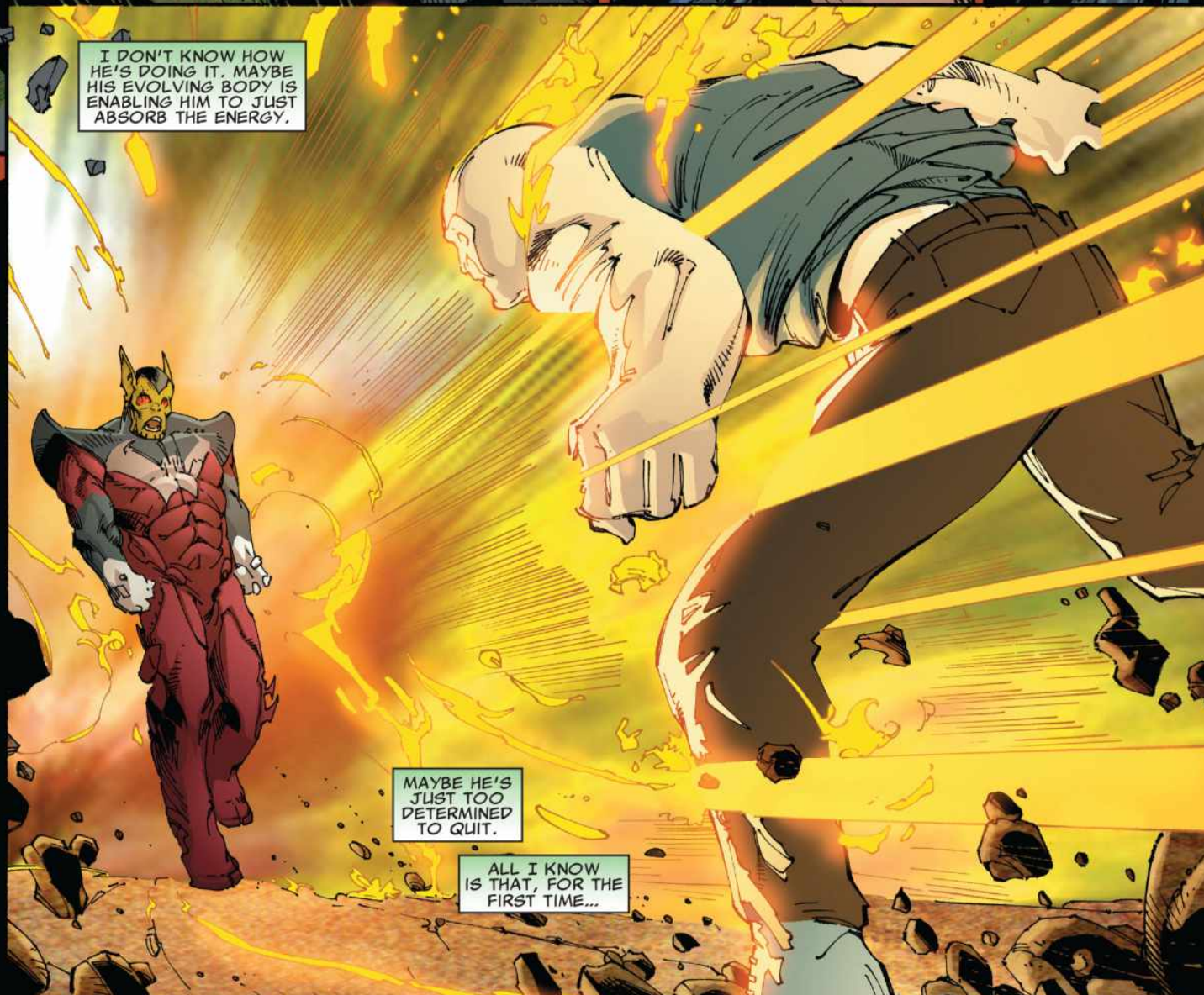
YOU
CAN TAKE THIS
GUY.
HE'S ALL
MOUTH. MOUTH
WITH A LIGHT
SHOW.



TAKE HIM
DOWN. I KNOW
YOU CAN.



HE'S
TAKEN.



I DON'T KNOW HOW
HE'S DOING IT. MAYBE
HIS EVOLVING BODY IS
ENABLING HIM TO JUST
ABSORB THE ENERGY.

MAYBE HE'S
JUST TOO
DETERMINED
TO QUIT.

ALL I KNOW
IS THAT, FOR THE
FIRST TIME...



...NOGOR
LOOKS
WORRIED.



STAY BACK,
ARMANDO! I'M
WARNING
YOU--!

YOU CAN
TAKE YOUR
WARNING
AND--



GOT'CHA!!!

UNNNHHH!!!



HEY! I HAD HIM! YOU HAD NO BUSINESS--

OKAY: RULE NUMBER ONE, NO ONE TELLS ME MY BUSINESS.

RULE NUMBER TWO: SEE RULE NUMBER ONE.



THIS NULLIFIER WILL KEEP HIM MANAGEABLE FOR THE TIME BEING.



THANKS FOR GETTING HIM OUT OF MY FACE.

NO PROBLEM.



NICER SKIN TONE, BY THE WAY.

SUITS YOU.



THANKS.



WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH 'IM?

I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT PROBABLY THE BEST PERSON TO TURN HIM OVER TO WOULD BE TONY STARK--

AND IF TONY STARK IS A SKRULL IMPOSTER?

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. J, ISN'T THAT RIDICU--?



OH GOD.

WOULD EXPLAIN A LOT, WOULDN'T IT.

OH MY GOD.

THE REGISTRATION ACT...EXILING YOUR BROTHER, DEPOWERING YOU...ALL OF IT...JUST TO PUT HIM IN A POSITION OF STRENGTH.



OH MY FREAKING GOD.

SO WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO--

I DON'T KNOW. I'LL FIGURE IT OUT. SHUT UP.

FINE, FINE.



NOW THERE GOES SOMEONE WITH SERIOUS TRUST ISSUES.



AND SHE-HULK...

NEXT TIME, HOW ABOUT YOU JUST TELL US WHAT'S GOING ON?

EVEN BETTER: NEXT TIME, JUST STAY THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY.



Shadowcat

